

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Agricultural Economics

FARM LABOR REPORT

Washington, D. C.

October 14, 1943

FARM EMPLOYMENT SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN
LAST YEAR. WAGE RATES HIGHEST OF RECORD

Farm employment on October 1 was slightly higher than for the same date last year and farm wage rates were the highest of record, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported today. The index of supply of farm labor was up 2 points from last year but the index of demand remained the same as on October 1, 1942.

The 11,938,000 persons working on farms the first of October represent a slight increase over a year ago and 3 percent over September 1 this year, but is about 2 percent less than the October average for the years 1938-42. The number of farm workers was higher on the first of this month than on July 1, although usually a small reduction occurs between these dates. The larger number this fall is largely accounted for by sharp gains in farm employment in the South Central States where cotton picking is in full swing and the weather generally favorable for out-door work.

The October 1 index of farm wages at 280 percent of the 1910-14 average was only 6 points higher than for the last quarterly report in July but is 60 points higher than the index of 220 on October 1, 1942. This is the greatest increase ever recorded within a year's time. All geographic divisions contributed to the gain in the wage rate index between the two October dates but, as has frequently occurred, the largest increase was recorded by the Pacific Region where the October index was 72 points higher than a year ago. Gains elsewhere ranged from 46 points in the East South Central region to 62 points in the West North Central States.

The average rates paid on October 1 were: Per month with board \$65.22, per month without board \$75.44; per day with board \$3.17, and per day without board \$3.51. The average rate paid per month without board was higher on October 1 than on July 1 in practically all States, but, because employment increased more in States with lower rates, the average for the country as a whole was slightly lower than on July 1. Other classes of payment were up a little from July, and all were much higher than for October last year. Advances over October a year ago were: Per month with board \$14.39 (28 percent); per month without board \$16.18 (27 percent); per day with board \$0.63 (25 percent); per day without board \$0.75 (27 percent).

The index of supply of farm labor of 56 percent of the 1935-39 average is 2 points higher than on October 1, 1942, indicating that in the opinion of crop reporters throughout the country there has been some improvement in the availability of workers as compared with the situation a year ago. The indexes by geographic divisions, however, show that this improvement has not been uniform in all areas. Decreases of 2 to 5 points are recorded in New England, South Atlantic, East South Central, and West South Central regions. New England, as it has each quarter

this year, reported the lowest index - 44 percent of the base period. The regions showing higher indexes than a year ago are: Middle Atlantic, East North Central, West North Central, Mountain and Pacific. The Pacific region shows an index of 62 compared with 47 a year ago.

The improved situation may be due in part at least to more complete organization and smoother operation of the programs designed to alleviate the farm labor problem. The importation of foreign workers is also a factor as are liberalized rules governing deferment from the draft of essential farm workers. Another consideration is the smaller production of some crops this season, particularly those requiring much hand labor, such as sugar beets.

The demand for farm labor remains unchanged from a year ago, according to the index of 125 percent of the 1935-39 average which is based on the judgment of about 20,000 farmers. Here again the situation is not uniform as four regions show higher demand indexes than a year ago. New England reports the greatest increase from last October but the index of 124 is not itself as high as that of 137 for the West North Central region. Although wage rates are relatively high, farmers appear willing to pay them in order to obtain help even though it is often untrained and inefficient. There is a particular need for skilled, able-bodied workers capable of operating machinery and doing heavy work such as loading potato and apple barrels and the like.

Labor needs for harvest in New England are now at peak levels. Imported labor has been very helpful for harvest of cranberries and potatoes but the Maine potato harvest is presenting very heavy labor demands which however, are apparently being met through vigorous steps now being taken. As in other sections of the country, general farm labor continues to be made up, to a considerable extent, of women, young children, and older men. Weather conditions have been favorable for doing farm work over most of the Middle Atlantic Region and fall harvest operations have gone forward as briskly as the labor situation would permit. On the first of October, nearly 5,000 workers from Jamaica and the Bahamas were available for work on farms in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. As the harvest of a certain crop is completed these people shift to other later maturing crops.

In the North Central States fall work is progressing satisfactorily although a heavy demand continues for workers. In Illinois, soybean combining is well underway and harvesting of annual legume hay is in full swing. Silo filling is also in progress or has been completed in Illinois and other North Central States. Fall plowing is being done and seeding of winter wheat has started. About 3,500 foreign workers (including some from Old Mexico) were on farms in the North Central region the first of the month.

Throughout the South, farm activity is at a high level as farmers are engaged in such jobs as picking cotton, handling tobacco, digging peanuts, cutting hay, picking fruit, and preparing ground for fall sowing. Many clear, dry days in most areas have made it possible to save some crops that might otherwise have been lost. In Texas, harvesting of corn, peanuts, and sweetpotatoes is still widespread and planting and transplanting of fall vegetables is active. Perhaps the most acute labor situation in Texas occurred in the rice harvest but this has been somewhat relieved.

Farmers in the Mountain States appear to have their fall work well in hand. This has resulted from good management and concerted efforts to utilize all available local help, importation of foreign workers, use of war prisoners, nearly ideal fall weather, and to some extent from the shift this season to crops requiring less hand labor.

On the West Coast the usual fall rush is on to harvest the large and varied crops produced in that section, and to do the fall planting. The fall labor situation continues to be difficult but does not appear acute at this time. Strenuous efforts have been made to make the most efficient use of available workers and to import help from Mexico. At the first of the month, there were about 30,000 Mexican Nationals doing farm work in the three Pacific Coast States. In Washington farm operations now being performed include harvest of apples, cranberries, potatoes, celery, cabbage, and spinach, seeding of grains, and planting of vegetable plants for seed. Thus far in Oregon there has been very little loss of crops because of a lack of farm labor, a contributing factor being the favorable harvest season. The canning tomato harvest is about at its peak in California as is the sugar beet harvest on the greatly reduced acreage. Harvest of prunes and almonds is approaching completion. Cotton picking had scarcely begun by October 1. Picking of table and wine grapes is general throughout the areas producing these crops. The walnut harvest will reach its peak later on. Potato and onion harvest in the Tule Lake area of northern California is at its peak. Rice harvest has been delayed by the generally late season and very little had been cut prior to October 1. Seasonal harvest of numerous vegetable crops continues and cutting of late hay crops and hay baling is still in progress in California.

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Foreign workers employed in or available for agricultural work,
by country of origin and State of employment,

MEXICANS			JAMAICANS			BAHAMIANS		
State	Number of workers		State	Number of workers		State	Number of workers	
North Dakota	209	::	Maine	291	::	New York	837	
South Dakota	86	::	Connecticut	1,169	::	Indiana	121	
Nebraska	189	::	New York	1,890	::	Michigan	94	
Montana	1,818	::	New Jersey	1,738	::	Delaware	227	
Idaho	815	::	Pennsylvania	294	::	Maryland	1,446	
Wyoming	465	::	Ohio	393	::	Virginia	251	
Colorado	705	::	Indiana	220	::	North Carolina	937	
Arizona	1,096	::	Illinois	121	::	Florida	340	
Nevada	332	::	Michigan	1,021	::			
Washington	2,065	::	Wisconsin	487	::			
Oregon	2,498	::	Minnesota	359	::			
California	26,000	::	North Dakota	135	::			
		::	Idaho	532	::			
Total	36,278	::	Total	8,650	::	Total	4,253	

Farm wage rates and related data, United States, October 1, 1943,
with comparisons

	Annual average 1910-14	Annual average 1935-39	Oct. 1, 1942	July 1, 1943	Oct. 1, 1943
FARM WAGE RATE INDEX:					
Unadjusted	100	118	220	274	280
Adjusted for seasonal variation	100	118	214	266	272
FARM WAGE RATES					
Per month with board	\$22.09	\$26.01	\$50.83	\$64.62	\$65.22
Per month without board	29.18	34.17	1/59.26	76.00	75.44
Per day with board	1.16	1.23	2.54	2.93	3.17
Per day without board	1.42	1.50	2.76	3.34	3.51
AVERAGE WEEKLY FACTORY EARNINGS <u>2/</u>					
	100	199	349	387	3/397
PRICES RECEIVED BY FARMERS <u>4/</u>					
	100	150	156	189	5/193
FARM EMPLOYMENT INDEXES (Adjusted for seasonal variation)					
Total	100	91	84	85	84
Family labor	100	91	85	86	87
Hired labor	100	89	83	81	80
EMPLOYMENT (Thousands of persons)					
Farm	12,052	10,920	11,921	11,749	11,938
Family labor	9,160	8,353	8,653	8,763	8,834
Hired labor	2,892	2,567	3,268	2,986	3,104
Nonagricultural <u>6/</u>	---	---	41,900	42,200	5/41,200
FARM WAGE RATE INDEXES					
United States	100	118	220	274	280
New England	100	143	247	279	298
Middle Atlantic	100	129	1/228	277	282
East North Central	100	115	213	249	256
West North Central	100	98	219	250	281
South Atlantic	100	111	179	222	223
East South Central	100	101	172	199	213
West South Central	100	102	192	232	247
Mountain	100	106	212	250	266
Pacific	100	129	273	331	345

1/Revised.

2/Index of factory pay roll per employed worker adjusted for seasonal variation

3/Aug. 1943 - latest data available.

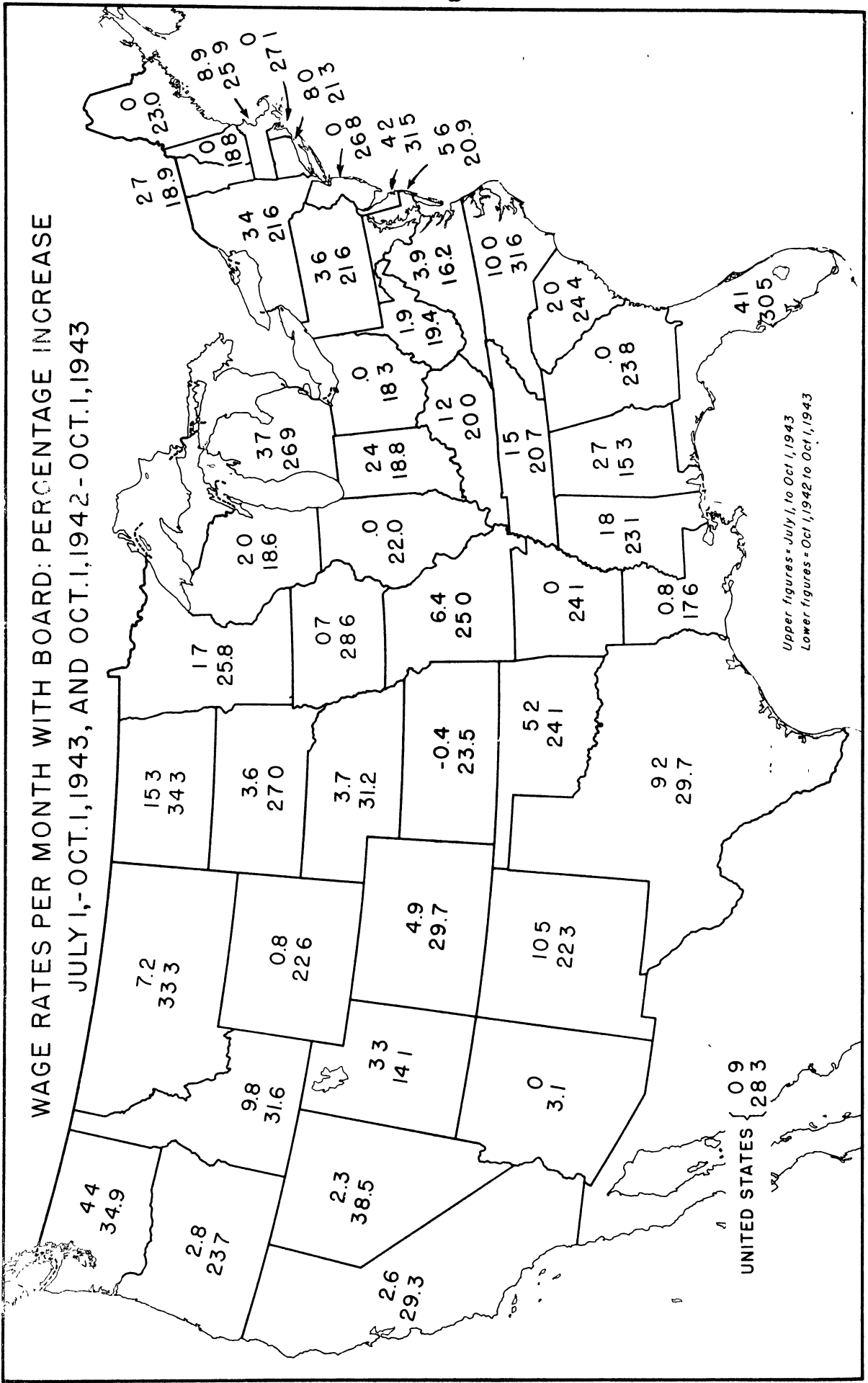
4/Average of the 15th of the given and the 15th of the preceding month.

5/September 1943 - latest data available.

6/Estimates of the Bureau of the Census relating to the week preceding the middle of the month.

Farm wage rates and employment based on reports from 20,821 workers.

WAGE RATES PER MONTH WITH BOARD: PERCENTAGE INCREASE
 JULY 1,-OCT.1,1943, AND OCT.1,1942-OCT.1,1943



Upper figures = July 1, to Oct 1, 1943
 Lower figures = Oct 1, 1942 to Oct 1, 1943

